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NINE HUMOROUS TALES. By Anton Chekhov. WHAT MEN LIVE FOR. By Leo Tolstoi. STORIES OF THE STEPPE. By Maxim Gorki. Boston: The Stratford Company.

These three little volumes, averaging about sixty pages each, form the most recent issues of the Stratford 25-cent Universal Library, under the general editorship of Henry T. Schnittkind and Isaac Goldberg. Each volume contains a brief introduction giving a critical estimate and a few biographical data. Almost pocket size, these little books are very attractive in appearance, with their binding of antique boards, their clear type, good paper, accurate translation, and careful editorship. Altogether only nine volumes have appeared, containing for the most part stories by French or Russian writers. We shall look forward with interest to other volumes of this useful series.

THE DIVINE IMAGE. A Book of Lyrics. By Caroline Giltman. Boston: The Cornhill Company.

WISCONSIN SONNETS. By Charles H. Winke. Milwaukee (530 Oakland Avenue): Badger Publishing Company.

SABER AND SONG. A Book of Poems. By William Thornton Whitsett. North Carolina: Whitsett Institute.

THE SOUL OF AMERICA. By Robert M. Wernaer. Boston: The Four Seas Company.

PAVED STREETS. By Elias Lieberman. Boston: The Cornhill Company.

FIFTY YEARS AND OTHER POEMS. By James Weldon Johnson. Boston: The Cornhill Company.

THE CYCLES. By Seneca G. Lewis and C. P. McDonald. Boston: The Cornhill Company.

THE CHARNEL ROSE AND OTHER POEMS. By Conrad Aiken. Boston: The Four Seas Company.

WAR POEMS FROM THE YALE REVIEW. With a Foreword by the Editors. New Haven: Yale University Press. \$1.00

YOUNG ADVENTURE. By Stephen Vincent Benét. New Haven: Yale University Press. \$1.25

POEMS OF NEW ENGLAND AND OLD SPAIN. By Frederick E. Pierce. Boston: The Four Seas Company. \$1.25

The first book on our list is a thin little volume of religious lyrics full of simple faith and tender devotion.

The thirty-three sonnets of Mr. Winke's collection appeared for the most part originally in local publications and now seek

to win a wider audience. Though inspired chiefly by local scenes, incidents, or characters,—such as “The Wisconsin Capitol,” “Milwaukee Bay,” “Robert M. La Follette” (“the champion of the people’s cause”),—the poems give expression to an abhorrence of war, an admiration for eugenics, and a sympathy with “this heart-warm, glad Ideal” of Socialism.

In spite of the military title, *Saber and Song* touches no phase of the present world-war but limits itself to somewhat commonplace moralizing on various aspects of man’s life and of nature. The “Ode to Expression” at the beginning of the volume seems to suggest the incentive to all of Mr. Whitsett’s verse, “God, let me voice myself before I die!” But the reader is impelled to ask, Why was it necessary for Mr. Whitsett to express himself in verse? Nowhere does he rise to poetic heights; he is woefully careless and ignorant in placing his accents,—as seen in such stresses as *amphor’al*, *Pegas’us Attil’a*, *Cimon’*, *Golgoth’a*, *gangrën’ous*,—and his method is didactic throughout. His message of faith, hope, courage, and love can be conveyed far better from the pulpit than through the medium of mediocre verse.

The “Bearers of Light” to America, the “Knights of the Spirit,” the “guardians of the *psyche* of our land,” our “psychic lords,” those only who know the Soul of America are our “psychocrats,” through whom is to come the salvation of America, the “preservation of Democracy.” A typical “psychocrat” is thus depicted:—

I know a shoemaker:
He buys the best leather;
He buys the best cord;
Every pair of shoes is well made;
He makes them by hand;
He has studied the anatomy of the human foot.
He reads.
He has a little library of good books.
He works hard.
All psychocrats work hard.

In such free verse is sung the song of the “psychocrat.”

The author of *Paved Streets*, who tells us that his father was “an atom of dust,” his mother “a straw in the wind to His Serene Majesty”; that one of his ancestors “died in the mines of

Siberia"; "another was crippled for life by twenty blows of the knut"; another was killed defending his home during the massacres";—seems to have been "cradled into poetry by wrong," for his verses have far more of poetic feeling than either of the two writers immediately preceding. The first division of his poems deals with kaleidoscopic scenes and incidents of New York streets, and the treatment is sometimes ironic, but always sympathetic. His shoemaker (p. 7), though a true "psychocrat" in that he works hard, has his dreams "as he taps, taps, taps," and like Whittier's merry men and women of "the good old Craft," lifts his soul above his menial task. There are also in this division three good tributes to O. Henry, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Edgar Allan Poe. The second division, "An Ancient Race," seeks to interpret the spirit of the oppressed Hebrews of Europe and makes a stirring appeal to them for the exercise of courage, patience, endurance, and loyalty. The best of these is the call to the Kingdom of Poland:—

Poland! Poland! Arm for the fray, unshackled, God-like, free;
Become the anointed champion of all who plod like me.

If not—like the rest of things outworn, nations or creeds or men,
Back you must go to the bottomless pit and there start over again.

The last division, "The Great Struggle," inspired by the War, voices the hopes and aspirations of the new Russia. As he sings how The Great White Czar is fallen, his "heart leaps Godward like the blaze that set my Russia free." From "liberty's shore" he sends across to his countrymen, who have suffered and feared, a message urging them to "fearlessly venture and and struggle ahead"—

The torch-flare of freedom
Must guide them aright;
America calls to them,
'Let there be light.'

Demos speaks to the Russian people, calling them to action, inspiring them with new hope:—

I am the voice of you,
I am the goal of you,
Brawn, bones and blood of you,
Heart, mind and soul of you.

And in his Chant of Loyalty he sings of how America has united the hearts of all folk who have come to her shore:—

One under palm and pine,
 One in the prairie sun,
 One on the rock-bound shore,
 Liberty-sighted;
 All that we have is thine,
 Thine, who has made us one,
 True to thee evermore,
 Stand we united.

Written by a negro, the verses in *Fifty Years and Other Poems* voice a manly, vigorous plea to the white people for justice, sympathy, and encouragement both on account of what the negroes have accomplished and on account of what the negroes may become if treated with contempt and injustice; and at the same time make an equally strong appeal to the negroes themselves for courage and faith in their "God-shown destiny" as "a part of some great plan." Simple, direct, convincing is the picture of the colored sergeant in the battle of San Juan Hill:—

And while the battle around him rolled,
 Like the roar of a sullen breaker,
 He closed his eyes on the bloody scene,
 And presented arms to his Maker.
 There he lay, without honor or rank,
 But, still, in a grim-like beauty;
 Despised of men for his humble race,
 Yet true, in death, to his duty.

Besides these poems typical of his race and voicing the instincts and aspirations of his race, there are others exhibiting considerable variety in subject and skill in treatment: translations from the Spanish and German, sonnets, impressionistic pictures "Down by the Carib Sea," and short lyrics breathing at times a note of suppressed voluptuous passion. A second division of the book is devoted to "Jingles and Croons," or verses in the negro dialect. In these the dialect is artificial and unnatural, such as is invariably used by Northern writers, so that apparently the very dialect of his race has become foreign to him. The interpretation, too, of the negro character and spirit is over-sentimental and unreal, as when the negro lover talks of "de flower wha' de nectah grows," expects to "meet

his Waterloo," and tells his lady-love that "nobody's lookin' but de owl an' de moon, An' de night is balmy fu' [for] de month is June." As we might expect, his verses succeed far better in interpreting the feelings of the college-bred negro than in furnishing a picture of his ancestors in slavery days.

Apparently in *The Cycles* we have an illustration of coöperative authorship, the theme having been furnished by one man and the poetic expression by another. The book falls into three divisions, or Cycles, entitled respectively Abandon of Youth, Doubt of Maturity, and Wisdom of Age, and tracing the growth of the soul from the idle philosophy of youth,—live for to-day, the future is an empty thing,—through the mature creed that "deeds well done reflect the Future Day," to the final belief that the aim of life is after all to "practice human kindness." The stanza is that of the Rubáiyát, *aaba*, but the epicureanism of Omar gives place to—

"the blessed Doctrine of
The Helping Hand in Trouble's fevered fray."

The language is facile, often felicitous, the stanza is skilfully handled, but the tone becomes at times monotonous and the thought not infrequently sinks to the commonplace.

Although the critics have hailed Mr. Conrad Aiken as a "born metrist" and have described his work as "subtly rich in tone-effects and in inner rhythms," and though Professor William Lyon Phelps insists that "Conrad Aiken is firmly, gladly on the earth," that dull-witted individual, the average reader, will doubtless make but little of his "nympholepsy" and will conclude that only a "true oneirocritic"—such as he to whom the *Charnel Rose* is dedicated,—can understand and adequately interpret his poetical symphonies.

Though treating of the suffering, sorrow, and losses occasioned by the war, the poems collected from the *Yale Review* strike no note of morbidness or of despair. They voice the feelings of those at the front who "act, and see, and ponder, and win. . . . peace in themselves"; they express the sense of joy and pride felt by all in those who have made the supreme sacrifice and

who "cannot die until human hearts are dead"; they flash a vision of—

"Beauty herself, within whose blossoming Spring
Even wretched man shall clap his hands and sing,"—

and rejoice in the certainty of that new freedom that is to come, "the last world-union, that kingdom of God in man."

There is no question about the vividness and dramatic power of Mr. Benét's recent collection of verse, whatever lapses one may find occasionally in taste and tone. He has far greater mastery of metrical effects than has Conrad Aiken, and his ballad of "The Hemp" for concreteness of imagery and conciseness and clearness of expression is one of the best of recent times.

Professor Pierce's *Poems of New England and Old Spain* offer a strong contrast to Mr. Benét's in their coolness and quietness and almost Wordsworthian baldness of blank verse. Wordsworthian, too, are "the incidents and situations from common life," treated with simplicity and naturalness and sympathy and set forth in language "purified from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust." In its sympathetic interpretation of the heart and soul of country folk, in its restrained passion, its sincerity and simplicity of style, "Father and Son" recalls Wordsworth's *Michael*; though the New England father yields with resignation and tranquillity to the boy's pleading to be gone, and the son dies sword in hand "in savage wars on alien islands."

AMERICAN BOYS' BOOK OF SIGNALS AND SYMBOLS. By Dan Beard. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott. \$2.00 net.

THE AMERICAN BOYS' ENGINEERING BOOK. By A. Russell Bond. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott. \$2.00 net.

The *Book of Signals and Symbols* contains descriptions, fully illustrated, of ideographs, picturegraphs, tramps', yeggmen's scouts', trappers', gypsies', and Indian symbols and signs, for the use of boys in their games in the open. The *Boys' Engineering Book*, designed to arouse and stimulate in the boy his